

SUPPORTING INTERNET SAFETY AWARENESS

OCTOBER 10, 2000.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed

Mr. BLILEY, from the Committee on Commerce,
submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany H. Res. 575]

The Committee on Commerce, to whom was referred the resolution (H. Res. 575) supporting Internet safety awareness, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with an amendment and recommend that the resolution as amended be agreed to.

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AMENDMENT

The amendment is as follows:

Strike all after the resolving clause and insert the following:

That the House of Representatives—

- (1) urges the citizens of the United States to recognize and support educational programs that make surfing on the Internet safe and fun;
- (2) supports initiatives to educate parents, children, educators, and community leaders about the enormous possibilities and the potential dangers of the Internet;

(3) urges all Americans to become informed about the Internet and to support proactive efforts that will provide Internet safety for children and for future generations to come; and

(4) expresses the sincere appreciation of the House of Representatives for the thousands of law enforcement officials who are aggressively working to protect America's children while they are online.

PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

The Internet provides a vast new array of opportunities and benefits. From improved communications to electronic commerce to telemedicine, the Internet has much to offer and deliver to the American people. Unfortunately, this technology is being used by criminals in society to take advantage of all Americans. Some people are using the Internet in harmful ways to spread their destructive material or aid their criminal activity. There has been a spread of obscene material, child pornography, and children exploitation as the Internet's popularity has increased.

Over the years, the law enforcement community has been called upon to improve enforcement of current law. They have also been asked to tell Congress where current law needs to change in order to reflect new technologies.

H. Res. 575 will not stop criminal activity but it will increase America's understanding of the problems created by using the Internet and promote efforts to increase safety awareness by America's parents and children.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

The Internet has experienced exponential growth over the past several years. The Internet connects millions of host computers in more than 250 countries and is growing. According to a recent study by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), approximately one-third of all Americans use the Internet in the United States.

Given the ubiquitous nature of its structure and operation, the Internet provides an opportunity to share and transmit large levels of information for many different purposes. It also allows communications between people near and far. These activities have helped fuel the surge in telecommunications and electronic commerce industries and the corresponding economic benefits currently experienced by U.S. economy overall.

While the benefits of the Internet have been well documented, the problems created with such a network have also been documented at length. Over the last few years, significant harmful activity has increased as the Internet has grown. Some of these problems involve the migration of activity that occurs independent of the Internet (e.g., fraud) while others are heightened because of the new communications medium (e.g., pornography). Many of these issues have been addressed in one form or another through action by the Committee. For instance, the Congress enacted the Child Online Protection Act in 1998 as an effort to increase the protection of children from accessing harmful, pornographic material.

Congress has tried to balance the need to keep U.S. businesses free from unnecessary government regulation in both the analog and digital environments, while addressing the use of the Internet for criminal or harmful behavior. Congress also has looked to the law enforcement community to increase its effort to stop and pre-

vent harmful actions occurring over the Internet. In addition, Congress has looked to promote consumer and public appreciation of the problems that can arise through Internet use via hearings, reports and other matters.

HEARINGS

The Committee on Commerce has not held hearings on the legislation.

COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

The Full Committee met in open markup session on October 5, 2000, and ordered H. Res. 575 reported to the House, with an amendment, by a voice vote, a quorum being present.

COMMITTEE VOTES

Clause 3(b) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives requires the Committee to list the record votes on the motion to report legislation and amendments thereto. There were no record votes taken in connection with ordering H. Res. 575 reported. A motion by Mr. Bliley to order H. Res. 575 reported to the House, with an amendment, was agreed to by a voice vote.

The following amendment was agreed to by a voice vote:

An amendment by Mr. Green, No. 1, adding recognition for law enforcement and their efforts to protect America's children while they are online.

COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT FINDINGS

Pursuant to clause 3(c)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee has not held oversight or legislative hearings on this legislation.

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM OVERSIGHT FINDINGS

Pursuant to clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, no oversight findings have been submitted to the Committee by the Committee on Government Reform.

NEW BUDGET AUTHORITY, ENTITLEMENT AUTHORITY, AND TAX EXPENDITURES

In compliance with clause 3(c)(2) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee finds that H. Res. 575, a resolution supporting Internet safety awareness, would result in no new or increased budget authority, entitlement authority, or tax expenditures or revenues.

COMMITTEE COST ESTIMATE

The Committee believes that H. Res. 575 will not result in any costs to the Federal government.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE ESTIMATE

The cost estimate provided by the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 was not timely received by the Committee.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE STATEMENT

No advisory committees within the meaning of section 5(b) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act were created by this legislation.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Pursuant to clause 3(d)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee finds that the Constitutional authority for this legislation is provided in Article I, section 8, clause 3, which grants Congress the power to regulate commerce with foreign nations, among the several States, and with the Indian tribes.

APPLICABILITY TO LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The Committee finds that the legislation does not relate to the terms and conditions of employment or access to public services or accommodations within the meaning of section 102(b)(3) of the Congressional Accountability Act.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS OF THE LEGISLATION

H. Res. 575 identifies a number of findings related to the problems facing Americans and increasing Internet safety awareness. These findings include: (1) the Internet provides citizens of the United States with the technology for research, education, entertainment, and communication; (2) millions of Americans, many school libraries and classrooms, and many public libraries are connected to the Internet; (3) more than 1 out of 5 missing 15- to 17-year-old teenagers have disappeared because of someone they met while chatting on the Internet; (4) there are an estimated 10,000 Internet websites designed for or by individuals who have a sexual preference for children; (5) there are an estimated 200 million pages of pornography, hate, violence, and abuse on the Internet; (6) there are multitudes of strangers who use the Internet to enter homes, talk to and “groom” children, and will take indecent advantages of those children if given a chance; and (7) children have been raped, assaulted, kidnaped, and deprived of their innocence by individuals they met on the Internet.

In order to help promote Internet safety awareness, the resolution recognizes the view of the House of Representatives that (1) citizens recognize and support educational programs that make surfing on the Internet safe and fun; (2) initiatives to educate parents, children, educators, and community leaders about the enormous possibilities and the potential dangers of the Internet; (3) all Americans to become informed about the Internet and to support proactive efforts that will provide Internet safety for children and for future generations to come; and (4) express the sincere appreciation of the House of Representatives for the thousands of law enforcement officials who are aggressively working to protect America’s children while they are online.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW MADE BY THE BILL, AS REPORTED

This legislation does not amend any existing Federal statute.